



Avoid “Returned without Review” ... An In-depth Look at Agency RFPs

Tony Ventimiglia
Shelly B. Hebb, CPRA
Hagan E. Walker, PhD

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Agenda

- Nomenclature (alphabet soup)
- Purpose (why do I care?)
- Common Components
- RFP Reviews (NSF, USDA-NIFA, NIH)
- Other Sponsors
- Next Steps (what do I do with this information?)

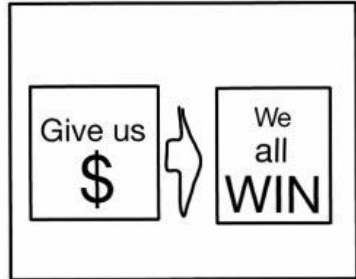


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2



Create a "logic model"



Here is our new simplified logic model



National Science Foundation

PD-Program Description
PS-Program Solicitation



Department of Energy

FOA – Funding Opportunity Announcement



National Institutes of Health

PA – Program Announcement
RFA – Request for Application
FOA – Funding Opportunity Announcement
RFP – Request for Proposal



Department of Defense

BAA – Broad Agency Announcement



United States Department of Agriculture

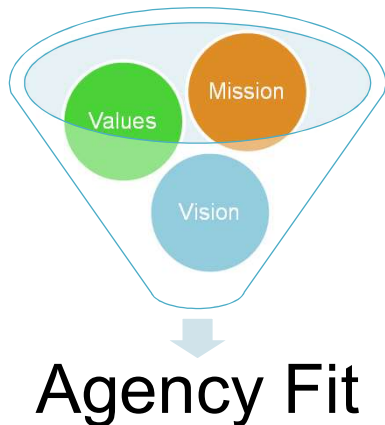
RFA – Request for Application



NASA

RA – Research Announcement





Purpose

The success of our proposals depends largely on how well we know our potential funder and on how effectively we match our project to what's important for them (values); what they say they stand for (mission); and their sense of what the future should be (vision).

In addition to doing a little “homework,” the RFP provides much of this information.



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Common Components



What is the most important component in a funding opportunity announcement?

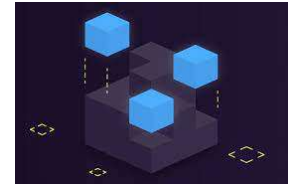
Use Zoom Q&A to type your responses!



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6

Common Components



General Information

- Eligibility, FOA number/name, CFDA

Important Dates

- Posting/closing/expiration, deadline, LOI, earliest start date, project period

Award Information

- Mechanism, funds available, anticipated award amount/number of awards, limited submissions



Common Components

- Proposal Elements
 - Abstract, summary, narrative, references/literature cited, letters of support/commitment, biographical sketches/CV
- Budget Details
 - Limitations, unallowable/required items, cost share



Commons Components

- Organization Registrations
 - DUNS, SAM, Grants.gov, sponsor-specific
- Additional Details
 - Formatting, page limits, templates, program officers/contacts, review criteria
 - E.O. 12372 – depend on state requirements

Studying the RFP

1st Step

- Print out the RFP
- Read CAREFULLY...do not scan
- Highlight specifics
- Use RFP as your proposal outline

Pay Attention To

- Program description (to assess fit)
- Award information
- Proposal preparation instructions (AND proposal guide)
- Review process

Tips

- Note any special requirements
- Ensure PI/Institution eligibility
- Make no assumptions
- Plan your proposal months in advance

NSF Major Research Instrumentation (MRI) Program

*“The MRI Program serves to increase access to multi-user scientific and engineering instrumentation for research and research training in our Nation's institutions of higher education and not-for-profit scientific/engineering research organizations. An MRI award supports the acquisition or development of a **multi-user research instrument** that is, in general, too costly and/or not appropriate for support through other NSF programs.”*

Solicitation: [NSF 18-513](#)



RFP Highlights - NSF

Who May Serve as PI:

There are no restrictions or limits.

The MRI Program especially seeks **broad representation** of PIs in its award portfolio, including women, underrepresented minorities and persons with disabilities. Since demographic diversity may be greater among **early-career researchers** the MRI program also encourages proposals with early-career PIs and proposals that benefit early-career researchers.



RFP Highlights - NSF

Limit on Number of Proposals per Organization:

Three (3) as described below. Potential PIs are advised to contact their institutional office of research regarding processes used to select proposals for submission.

The MRI program requires that an MRI-eligible organization may, as a performing organization, submit or be included as a significantly funded subawardee in no more than three MRI proposals. Beginning with this competition, each performing organization is now limited to a maximum of three proposals in revised “Tracks” as defined below, with no more than two submissions in Track 1 and no more than one submission in track 2. Any MRI proposal may request support for either the acquisition or development of a research instrument. Within their submission limit, NSF strongly encourages organizations to submit proposals for innovative development projects.



RFP Highlights - NSF

Any MRI proposal may request support for **either** the acquisition or development of a research instrument.

Track 1: Track 1 MRI proposals are those that request funds from NSF greater than or equal to \$100,001 and less than \$1,000,000.

Track 2: Track 2 MRI proposals are those that **request funds** from NSF greater than or equal to \$1,000,000 up to and including \$4,000,000.



RFP Highlights - NSF

Note: The 30% cost-sharing requirement applies to only the portion of the total project cost budgeted to non-exempt organizations, including those participating through subawards. When required, **cost-sharing must be precisely 30%**. Cost sharing is required for Ph.D.-granting institutions of higher education and for non-degree-granting organizations. Non-Ph.D.-granting institutions of higher education are exempt from cost-sharing and cannot provide it. National Science Board policy is that voluntary committed cost sharing is prohibited.



RFA – USDA

Agriculture and Food Research Initiative Competitive Grants Program

04/21/2021 Modifications: All substantive modifications and additional edits appear in red.

Foundational and Applied Science Program

Fiscal Years (FY) 2021 and 2022 Request for Applications

LETTER OF INTENT DEADLINE: Varies by Program Area
APPLICATION DEADLINE: Varies by Program Area

ELIGIBILITY: See Part III, A of this RFA

This RFA solicits applications for two review cycles (2021 and 2022) covering three years of budgets (FY 2021, FY 2022, and FY 2023). Applicants considering applying to the 2022 review cycle should check the AFRI RFA webpage and www.grants.gov after **December 15, 2021** for the 2022 Funding Opportunity Number and Application Kit, as well as for any other changes.



RFA – USDA

Letters of Intent

- Are they Required
- Deadline for Submission

Executive Summary

- Anticipated Funding
- Types of Projects
- Deadlines

RFA – USDA

Key Information

- Application Requirements
 - Additional guidelines (SF424 Guide for NIFA)
 - Details Part IV, C. (17 pages)

Key Information

- Program Priorities
 - Types of programs to be funded
 - Budget limitations
 - Program Contacts

RFA - USDA

Project and Grant Types

<https://nifa.usda.gov/resource/afri-request-applications-resources>

- Project: Research, Education, Extension, Integrated
- Grant: Standard, Coordinated Ag Projects, Conference, Collaborative, FASE

RFA - USDA

Part III:

Eligibility Criteria

Cost Sharing or Matching

- Requirements
- Waiver process/Criteria

RFA-USDA

Matching funds requirements for AFRI programs included in this RFA may be found at 7 U.S.C. 3157 (b)(9)(a-C). If an applied **Research** (see Part VIII, D of this RFA) or **Integrated Project** with an applied research component, is commodity-specific and not of national scope, the grant recipient is required to match the USDA funds awarded on a dollar-for-dollar basis from non-federal sources with cash and/or in-kind contributions.

NIFA may waive the matching funds requirement based on submitted document (see Part IV, C(6) of this RFA), for a grant if we determine that: **a.** The results of the project, while of particular benefit to a specific agricultural commodity, are likely to be applicable to agricultural commodities generally; or **b.** The project involves a minor commodity, the project deals with scientifically important research, and the grant recipient is unable to satisfy the matching funds requirement.

For Equipment Grants: The amount of Federal funds provided may not exceed 50 percent of the cost of the equipment acquired using funds from the grant, or \$50,000, whichever is less.

Grantees are required to match 100 percent of Federal funds awarded from non-Federal sources. NIFA may waive all or part of the matching requirement if all three of the following criteria are met:

1. application is from a college, university, or research foundation maintained by a college or university that ranks in the lowest one third of such colleges, universities, and research foundations on the basis of Federal research funds received (see AFRI RFA Resources page "Table 2 Least Successful Institutions" in the attachments list, for more information);
2. the equipment to be acquired costs no more than \$25,000; and
3. the equipment has multiple uses within a single research project or is usable in more than one research project. To be considered for this waiver, the budget justification (see Part IV, C(6) of this RFA) must include a letter signed by the institution's AR addressing the noted criteria.



RFA-USDA

Part IV – Application and Submission

<https://nifa.usda.gov/resource/nifa-grantsgov-application-guide>

<https://nifa.usda.gov/resource/afri-request-applications-resources>

- <https://nifa.usda.gov/sites/default/files/resource/AFRI-SAS-RFA-Additional-Information-for-Part-IV-C.pdf>

Electronic Application Package

- LOI Deadline
- Full Application Deadline



RFA-USDA

Funding Restrictions

U.S.C. § 3310 limits indirect costs for the overall award to 30 percent of Total Federal Funds Awarded (TFFA) under a research, education, or extension grant. The maximum indirect cost rate allowed under the award is determined by calculating the amount of indirect costs using:

- 1) the sum of an institution's negotiated indirect cost rate and the indirect cost rate charged by subawardees, if any; or
 - 2) 30 percent of TFFA (TFFA = Field K., Total Costs and Fee, on SF-424 R&R Budget).
- The maximum allowable indirect cost rate under the award, including the indirect costs charged by the subawardee(s), if any, is the lesser of the two rates.

The indirect costs of the prime awardee plus the sum of the indirect costs charged by the subawardee(s), if any, may not exceed 30 percent of the TFFA



RFA-USDA

PART V – Application Review Requirements

- Evaluation: NIFA evaluates each application in a two-part process. First, we screen each application to ensure that it meets the administrative requirements as set forth in this RFA. Second, a scientific peer- review process will be used to technically evaluate applications that meet the administrative requirements using a review panel (see NIFA Peer Review Process).
- Award Administration

PART VI – Agency Contacts



National Institutes of Health (NIH)

Participating Organization – NIH, AHRQ, etc.?

Participating Organization(s)

Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ)

NOTE: The policies, guidelines, terms, and conditions stated in this announcement may differ from those used by the NIH. Where this Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) provides specific written guidance that may differ from the general guidance provided in the grant application form, please follow the instructions given in this FOA.

Also note that AHRQ has different page limits than NIH for the application Research Strategy, which can be found within each individual FOA.

Components of Participating Organization

- Which centers and institutes are involved? Not all accept application for all types of grant programs.



NIH, continued

Activity Code – R01, R21, R34, etc.?

- Impacts dates, page limits, goals, etc.

Reissue or related notices

- Important to review for any updates and to ensure you have correct FOA

Special Dates

- Standard date; AIDS application dates



NIH, continued

Required application instructions

- SF424 guidelines - use most up-to-date version

Submission portals

- Assist, eRA Commons, Workspace

Funding Opportunity Purpose and Description

- Watch for special considerations



NIH, continued

Application Types - new, resubmission, revision

- Additional requirements based on type

Clinical Trials determination

- Complete questionnaire
- Additional documents required for clinical trial

Budget determination – R&R versus Modular

- Modular - \$250,000 or less per budget period in direct costs, but there are exceptions.
- Justifications – personnel and consortium



NIH, continued

Additional registrations - eRA Commons, Assist Content and form of application submission

- Refer to Page Limit table specific to activity code
- Must refer to SF424 R&R guidelines for details

Agency contacts

- Consider sending specific aims for feedback

SF424(R&R) Cover

All instructions in the SF424 (R&R) Application Guide must be followed.

SF424(R&R) Project/Performance Site Locations

All instructions in the SF424 (R&R) Application Guide must be followed.

SF424(R&R) Other Project Information

All instructions in the SF424 (R&R) Application Guide must be followed.

SF424(R&R) Senior/Key Person Profile

All instructions in the SF424 (R&R) Application Guide must be followed.

R&R or Modular Budget

All instructions in the SF424 (R&R) Application Guide must be followed.

R&R Subaward Budget

All instructions in the SF424 (R&R) Application Guide must be followed.

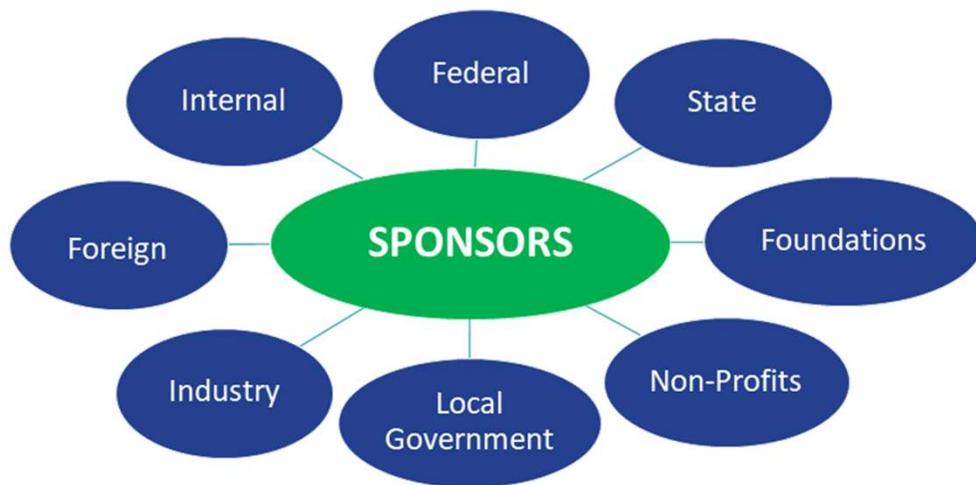
PHS 398 Cover Page Supplement

All instructions in the SF424 (R&R) Application Guide must be followed.

PHS 398 Research Plan

All instructions in the SF424 (R&R) Application Guide must be followed, with tr

Sponsors



Other Non-Profit Guidelines

Common components still apply

- Eligibility, deadline, required proposal elements, submission channel, etc.

Potential unique circumstances

- RFP typically driven by foundation's priorities
- Focus on evaluation, outcomes, and sustainability
- LOI may be required to move forward

Other Non-Profit Guidelines

Potential unique circumstances, cont.

- May not provide earliest start date, but rather timeline for notification/funding to be issued
- More likely to ask for cost share
- More likely to disallow indirect costs
- May not have published policies (F&A, Cost Share)
- Deadline may be rolling or set
- Review criteria is often not provided

Other – Private Industry/Foreign

Potential Unique Circumstances

- May have specific terms and conditions that need to be addressed at the proposal stage
- May have special submission requirements (multiple volumes, task-oriented budgets)
- Sponsor may not specify indirect costs or may attempt to limit costs
- Guidelines may need translation
- Deadline for foreign sponsors may affect local processing times
- May require leveraging resources or cost share

Other Federal Sponsors

NASA

- General Submission:
https://www.nasa.gov/sites/default/files/atoms/files/2021_ed_nasa_guidebook_for_proposers.pdf

Department of Defense

- <https://ebrap.org/eBRAP/public/index.htm>
- <https://www.onr.navy.mil/en/work-with-us/how-to-apply/submit-contract-proposal>

HRSA

- <https://www.hrsa.gov/grants/manage-your-grant/policies-regulations-guidance>

Next Steps

What do you do with all this information?

- Create checklist to assist in organizing submission
- Talk with PI and project team
- Establishing proposal development timeline
- Final review prior to submission



Questions?

